

**Preliminary Amendment of U.S. National Stage for International Application
PCT/EP99/09404 filed December 2, 1999**

--BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A2
The present invention relates, in general, to compositions and processes for sealing or consolidating rock, mantle rock or soils and to the use for this purpose of silica sols containing hardness stabilizers.--

At page 3, between lines 19 and 20 thereof, please insert the following new section heading:

A3
--DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION--

At page 10, before line 1, please add the following new paragraph:

A4
--What is claimed is:--

On a separate, new page 12, following page 11, please add the following new section heading and paragraph containing an Abstract of the Disclosure:

A5
--ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Compositions which comprise an aqueous silica sol and one or more hardness stabilizers selected from inorganic polyphosphates, phosphonic acids, aminoethylene phosphonic acids, phosphoric acid esters, phosphonocarboxylic acids, and polycarboxylics, are described for sealing and/or consolidating rocks and/or soils, particularly in digging or drilling applications. Methods of sealing and/or consolidating rocks and soils using said compositions are also described. --

In the Claims:

Please add new claims 11-32, as follows:

A6
--11. (New) A composition comprising:

(a) an aqueous silica sol, wherein the composition contains SiO₂ in an amount of from 2 to 40% by weight based upon the weight of the composition; and